

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please delete claims 1-23, 58-105 and 116-124 *without prejudice to restate*.
Claims 1-23 Cancelled

24. (Original) An apparatus for attaching at least one support device to at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said apparatus including: means for providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and means for applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is held by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

25. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is selected from one or more of the following: any suitable growing rope, any suitable growing rope that is socked with any suitable mesh sock, and/or any suitable mesh sock.

26. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 24 ~~or claim 25~~, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes an elongate mesh sock which has been socked with molluscs and contains an elongate core growing rope.

27. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 26~~, wherein said means for providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at

least one drive wheel that is adapted to engage and draw said at least one elongate mollusc growing line through said apparatus.

28. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 27, wherein said at least one drive wheel cooperates with at least one guide wheel capable of assisting said drawing of said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is drawn through said apparatus.

29. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 27 ~~or claim 28~~, wherein said at least one drive wheel includes paired upwardly projecting ridges arranged around an outer periphery thereof.

30. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein said paired ridges define V-shaped recesses between respective pairs that are adapted to accommodate elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

31. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 30, wherein said V-shaped recesses provide said at least one drive wheel with a means of engaging and driving elongate mollusc growing lines of varying diameters.

32. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 29 to 31~~, wherein said paired ridges include tapered faces in the direction of travel of said at least one drive wheel to assist said at least one drive wheel in grabbing and engaging said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing through said apparatus.

33. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 32~~, wherein said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one slide which cooperates with said means for applying said at least one support device, wherein said at least one support device is loaded onto said at least one slide ready for application by said means for applying said at least one support device.

34. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 33, wherein said at least one slide is adapted to facilitate the supply of one support device at a time to said means for applying said at least one support device.

35. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 33 ~~or claim 34~~, wherein support devices are supplied in a queue via said at least one slide to said means for applying said at least one support device.

36. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 33 ~~or claim 34~~, wherein said at least one slide is adapted to receive at least one weight, wherein said at least one weight is adapted to be loaded onto said at least one slide after said at least one support device in order to drive said at least one support device to said means for applying said at least one support device.

37. (Original) The apparatus as claim in claim 36, wherein more than one support device is loaded onto said at least one slide in a cartridge form.

38. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 37~~, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one set of mating jaws adapted to be drawn into engagement with one another in order to grab and releasably hold said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

39. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 38 ~~when dependent on any one of claims 26 to 37~~, wherein said at least one set of mating jaws include V-shaped opposed peripheral mating surfaces that, in use, engage and compress said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said jaws, mesh sock compression relative to said elongate core growing rope and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

40. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 37~~, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one jaw plate which can engage and drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between at least one set of rotating wheels disposed on parallel axes, said at least one set of rotating wheels being adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is driven through said nip formed between said at least one set of rotating wheels.

41. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 40 ~~when dependent on any one of claims 26 to 37~~, wherein said at least one jaw plate has a V-shaped peripheral engaging surface and said rotational force induced by said at least one set of rotating wheels engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least one set of rotating wheels, mesh sock compression relative to said elongate core growing rope and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

42. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 37~~, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one control plate defining a generally U-shaped opening therein and including at

least one slot bordering each side of said U-shaped opening, said slots defining at least one track for receiving and guiding at least two mating quadrants therein, said U-shaped opening being adapted to receive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to engage and drive said at least one elongate mollusc growing line into and through a nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants, said at least two mating quadrants adapted to engage and induce a rotational force on said at least one elongate mollusc growing line when said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is driven through said nip formed between said at least two mating quadrants.

43. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 42 ~~when dependent on any one of claims 26 to 37~~, wherein said rotational force induced by said at least mating two quadrants in cooperation with said at least one control plate engages and compresses said at least one elongate mollusc growing line to facilitate simultaneous mollusc parting about said at least two mating quadrants, mesh sock compression relative to said elongate core growing rope, and location of said elongate core growing rope within said mesh sock to provide an attachment area for said at least one support device.

44. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 39, 41 or 43~~, wherein said attachment area is substantially free from molluscs and ready for attachment of said at least one support device by said means for applying said at least one support device.

45. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 39 to 44~~, wherein said means for applying said at least one support device includes at least one push arm.

46. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 45, wherein said at least one push arm is adapted, in use, to engage one support device from said at least one slide and to push said one support device into engagement with said at least one elongate mollusc growing line relative to

said attachment area provided by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

47. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 45 ~~or claim 46~~, wherein said push arm is mechanically actuated by at least one ram means and/or any other suitable means able to drive said push arm.

48. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 24 to 47, wherein said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination thereof.

49. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 48, wherein said at least one support device includes any suitable attachment means that is able to facilitate attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

50. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 49, wherein said attachment means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

51. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 24 to 32, wherein said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes at least one jaw plate for receiving therein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line, and at least one push arm for engaging and driving said at least one elongate mollusc

growing line into said at least one jaw plate such that, in use, said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in a compressed state in said at least one jaw plate by said at least one push arm.

52. (Original) The apparatus as claimed in claim 51, wherein said means for providing said at least one support device includes at least one hopper, and wherein said means for applying said at least one support device includes at least one support device engaging push arm adapted to engage at least one support device from within said at least one hopper and to drive said at least one support device through said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held in said compressed state.

53. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in claim 51 ~~or claim 52~~, wherein said at least one support device is at least one skewer.

54. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 52~~, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto is adapted to be suspended below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for molluscs during their growth.

55. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 52~~, wherein said at least one support device is attachable to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any fixed location.

56. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of claims 24 to 52~~, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.

57. (Original) An apparatus for providing at least one elongate mollusc growing line having at least one support device attached thereto, said apparatus including: means for supplying at least one elongate sock for injection with molluscs; means for injecting said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock; and means for driving said at least one elongate sock through said apparatus, wherein, in use, said injection means continually socks said molluscs into said at least one elongate sock as said at least one elongate sock is conveyed by said driving means to provide said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and means for applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is held by said means for releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

Claims 58 – 105 - Canceled

106. (Original) A method for attaching at least one support device to at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said method including the steps of: providing said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; providing said at least one support device for attachment to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line; releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at a predefined location; and applying said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line whilst said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is releasably held.

107. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 106, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line is selected from one or more of the following: any suitable growing rope,

any suitable growing rope that is socked with any suitable mesh sock, and/or any suitable mesh sock.

108. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 106 ~~or claim 107~~, wherein said at least one elongate mollusc growing line includes an elongate mesh sock which has been socked with molluscs and contains an elongate core growing rope.

109. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 108, wherein said step of releasably holding said at least one elongate mollusc growing line provides an attachment area for said at least one support device to be applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line, said attachment area being substantially free from molluscs and said elongate core growing rope being located within said elongate mesh sock to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

110. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~any one of claims 106 to 109~~, wherein said at least one support device is selected from one or more of the following group: a planar support plate; a disc-shaped support plate; a support structure incorporating a series of protrusions; a support structure incorporating a ring-like support area; a cage-like structure; and/or, any suitable combination thereof.

111. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~any one of claims 106 to 110~~, wherein said at least one support device includes any suitable attachment means that is able to facilitate attachment of said at least one support device to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line.

112. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 111, wherein said attachment means is selected from one or more of the following group: an inwardly tapered slot for receiving said at

least one elongate mollusc growing line therein and, in use, to wedge said at least one elongate mollusc growing line between opposed sides of said inwardly slot to facilitate attachment thereto; a skewer-like projection; and/or any suitable clip-type arrangement.

113. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 106 to 112, further including the step of suspending said at least one elongate mollusc growing line having said at least one support device attached thereto below the surface of water in order to provide a growing environment for said molluscs during their growth.

114. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 106 to 113, wherein more than one support device is applied to said at least one elongate mollusc growing line at any predefined location.

115. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in ~~any one of~~ claims 106 to 114, wherein a body portion of said at least one support device is adapted to provide additional support area for said molluscs to attach to or be supported by as they grow.

Claims 116-124 Cancelled